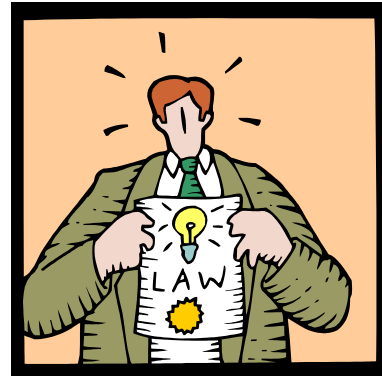

MERGER BILL PASSES LEGISLATURE

HB 2431 which brings the Department of Health into the Department of Human Services passed its final legislative hurdle last week. Effective July 1st, 2005, the Department of Human Services will be renamed the Department of Health and Human Services. Under the new legislation, the Department of Health will function as a division of DHS. While the effective date is July 1, the integration process of these two organizations is expected to stretch out over several months, possibly even taking years to complete.

Recently DHS senior management met with their counterparts at the Health Department to discuss some key transition issues including communication. "Although we don't have a detailed plan yet, both agencies agree that the key to a seamless transition is good communication among staff," said Julie Munsell, DHS Director of Communication. "Because this is a lengthy and deliberate process, sharing information as it becomes available allows all employees to participate in the process and be more comfortable with upcoming change." The bill also creates a Chief Medical Officer for the State to deal with public health issues and moves the position of Drug Director into the Division of Behavioral Health Services. The bill now goes to the Governor's desk for signature.



DCFS Reaches Out to Raise Awareness of Child Abuse

Many of Arkansas' children do not know what it is like to be safe in their homes. Tragically, children – of all races, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds – die each day in this country as a result of abuse or neglect. During April's annual observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month, DHS' Division of Children and Family services will be sponsoring events at the local level to call attention to the importance of preventing these tragedies and all forms of child maltreatment. Central office will deliver materials for local workers to distribute at their hometown events. The Division will spotlight drug abuse as part of their outreach campaign focusing intently on the rising problem with Methamphetamine. The role communities and individuals play will be another key

message throughout the month. There are so many things that individuals can do – during April and throughout the year – to keep the children in their lives and communities from becoming statistics. Everyone can play a role in preventing child abuse. Reach out to kids and families in your community. Take action to help ensure that the children in your community are safe.

DHS AROUND THE STATE

Wear Red for Women

The Polk County DHS Office participated in “Wear Red for Women” on February 4th. The office showed their support for women with heart disease by dressing in red. Hats off to the staff for their support of such a worthy cause!



WELLNESS WORKS

The Conway Human Development Center will be hosting its’ 1st Annual Health Fair on Wednesday, May 11th from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Health screenings will be performed. There will be door prizes and other giveaways. Several local vendors have agreed to participate. For more information, contact Sally Sellers at 501-329-6851, ext. 319 or Jill Blankenship, ext. 263.

The Jonesboro Human Development Center employees battled in a friendly weight loss competition aimed at improving their health and fitness. The competition held February 1st-March 15th received center-wide support and encouragement from both employees and the community. “The concept of a competition came after discussing being overweight with different employees. From there I decided a friendly competition would be a good way to get everyone involved and working toward the shared goal of losing weight,” said Marie Brownlee, Hab/ Rehab Instructor II. Employees banded together during the competition forming departmental teams to encourage one another to stay in the game. Those who participated in the weight loss competition changed their eating habits by giving up junk food, sodas, and utilizing special diet and exercise plans. Robbie Holt, Medical Services Secretary persuaded local businesses in the Jonesboro area to donate prizes for employees participating in the weight loss competition. Prizes

included gift certificates to restaurants, specialty shops, beauty salons, bookstores and body art boutiques. "We were not expecting prizes for losing weight. We knew losing weight was something we had to do in order to live a healthier life," Brownlee said. "Being able to win prizes added extra incentive to those participating," she said. Employees were weighed every Tuesday during the six- week competition. At the end of the competition everyone was weighed for the final time. The winner was determined based on who lost the most weight during the staff challenge. The winner was then able to choose first from the available prizes offered. A total of forty-six employees from JHDC completed the competition, losing a total of 428 pounds as a group. Way to go JHDC!!!

Changes/Transitions....

Joylane Coffman (DCO) has been selected as the new **Pope County Administrator**. Joylane brings 22 years of experience with DCO. During her years of service, Joylane has served as a Family Support Specialist, Rover, Multiple Program Supervisor, Answer Project Trainer and most recently, Economic Services Supervisor. Joylane began her new position on March 28, 2005.

Ruthie Brown (DCO) has been selected as the new **Phillips County Administrator**. During her years of service, Ruthie has served as a case worker, Family Support Specialist Supervisor and most recently as an Economic Services Supervisor with DCO. Ruthie began her new position on March 28th, 2005.

Congratulations to...

Blondell Hinton (DYS) for competing for the **third time** in the Little Rock Marathon. Blondell finished 266th while walking in the women's portion of the race. Blondell completed a half marathon during the first year and the entire marathon her second and third years of competition. Blondell's rewards were good health, a t-shirt and a full-sized Little Rock Marathon Medal.

Thought for the day:

The only way to have a friend is to be a friend – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Community Calendar...



April 22nd - 19th Annual Arkansas Women's Conference

"High Heels – High Ideals", for a complete list and to register, check the website: www.arkwc.org or e-mail cwc_all@yahoo.com.

April 23rd – DHS Heart Walk, North Little Rock – for more details, contact Ruby Shackelford by calling 501-683-2674 or e-mail: ruby.shackelford@arkansas.gov.

April 27th – Administrative Professionals Day



Do you have something you'd like to share in the newsletter?
Send e-mail to Julie.Munsell@arkansas.gov or
Ingrid.Green@arkansas.gov. Send a fax to (501) 682-6836 or
call (501) 682-8650.